

**TOWN OF BOONE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES  
MARCH 9, 2021  
3:00 PM**

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**Historic Preservation Commission Members in Attendance:**

Chairperson Eric Plaag, Vice-Chairperson Phoebe Pollitt, Bettie Bond and Chuck Watkins

**Council Liaisons:** Rennie Brantz and Virginia Roseman

**Town Staff in Attendance:**

Jane Shook-Director of Planning and Inspections, Christy Turner-Senior Planner and Marlene Crosby-Board Secretary

**Others Present:** Mark Freed, Director of Cultural Resources

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**Call to Order**

Chairperson Eric Plaag called the meeting of the Boone Historic Preservation Commission, held via WebEx, a video conferencing software to order on Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 3:03 p.m.

**Adoption of Agenda**

Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins to approve the agenda as amended. Chairperson Plaag requested to merge the Civil War Trails Markers with the Boone Historic Cemetery Interpretative Educational Panels agenda item.

**Vote:**

Aye – All

Nay – None

**The motion passed.**

Chairperson Plaag polled the HPC members as follows:

Member Bond, Member Watkins and Chairperson Plaag

**Public Comment**

No individuals requested the opportunity to speak during public comment.

**Junaluska Local Historic Marker Dedication – Road Closure**

Ms. Christy Turner, Senior Planner talked about the responses she had received from the Town of Boone Public Works Department and Police Department regarding the proposed road closures. She said both departments approved the proposed road closures suggested by the HPC for the marker dedication. She said both of the Town departments had asked if the HPC could discuss scaling down the proposed road closures because both departments were

concerned about potentially blocking access to the funeral home. She confirmed that the Public Works Department could put up substantial barriers to block the roads for safety purposes.

Discussion ensued on changing the proposed road closures. Chairperson Plaag asked if the issue that the Town departments are having is with going to the funeral home or with leaving the funeral home. Ms. Turner said the issue is both because we do not know what might be occurring at the funeral home during the time of the proposed road closure. She suggested contacting the funeral home and asking if they could work with the Town on the proposed road closures of 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 19, 2021.

Chairperson Plaag suggested that the HPC propose a recommendation to close the lower section of North Depot Street and the westbound lane of Queen Street at North Depot Street from the Watauga County Library to the Austin and Barnes Funeral Home driveway. He noted that this proposed recommendation would not allow the northbound traffic on Depot Street to turn left onto Queen Street for said proposed time. There was a consensus of the HPC on Chairperson Plaag's suggestion for the proposed road closures for said marker dedication.

#### **Certificate of Appropriateness Application**

Ms. Turner explained that the Planning Staff has almost completed the draft Certificate of Appropriateness application and they will try to have it completed in the next couple of weeks. Chairperson Plaag requested that the Planning Staff email what they have completed so far on the draft COA application to the HPC prior to the next HPC meeting, so they can review it and be prepared to comment on it at that meeting.

Ms. Turner explained that the HPC would need to go through the Quasi-Judicial training prior to attending Town meetings concerning COA cases. She said the Planning Staff would begin to work on coordinating said training with the Town Attorney.

Council Liaison Roseman joined the meeting at approximately 3:17 p.m.

Chairperson Plaag noted that there is a future case for the Linney House that will involve the COA process.

Chairperson Plaag explained that the Quasi-Judicial process could offer applicants the option of day or evening meetings that do not conflict with other scheduled Town meetings. He suggested putting this said information on the COA application because it could give the applicant some flexibility to have day or evening meeting options. Ms. Turner pointed out that the Planning Staff would also have to coordinate with the Town Attorney on the meeting date and time.

Ms. Turner reminded the HPC about the deadlines that are required for the advertising of a Town meeting and the posting of the property on COA cases.

#### **Boone Historic Cemetery Interpretative Educational Panels**

Chairperson Plaag gave a brief history of the Boone Historic Cemetery noting some of the activities that have gone on in the east section of the cemetery such as sunbathing, skiing and dog walking. He noted that the Town of Boone has owned said cemetery since 2015 located off Howard Street near the Appalachian State University campus. He explained that at the last HPC meeting, Mr. Ward had asked the HPC to begin discussions on the educational panels agenda item. Chairperson Plaag explained that the educational panels would make the public aware of the history of the cemetery.

Chairperson Plaag suggested making pocket brochures that would explain the history of the cemetery and why it is a divided cemetery as well as why the three Union Soldiers are buried there. Member Bond suggested placing bar codes on the signs, so the public can see the map of the cemetery and be able to read about the history of it on their smart phones rather than using pocket brochures.

Ms. Turner pointed out that the Town of Boone GIS Department has already mapped the cemetery and the maps contain who is buried there. Chairperson Plaag noted that the GIS Department is waiting on him to complete the research on the cemetery and the GIS Department can add it to the mapping that has already been completed.

Member Watkins suggested making the said panels weatherproofed and fun to read to prevent informational overload, the panels should contain the reasons why the cemetery is a sacred space and why the cemetery is in the middle of Boone. He also suggested installing poop-bag stations.

Council Liaison Roseman noted that she likes the idea of explaining the history of the east and west sections of the cemetery. Chairperson Plaag explained that sometime back, there was a fence in the cemetery that divided the two sections of the cemetery; but the fence has been removed.

Discussion ensued on possibly getting Civil War Trails Markers. Chairperson Plaag talked about speaking with Mr. Drew Gruber, Executive Director of the Civil War Trails Program. Chairperson Plaag explained that Mr. Gruber had contacted him regarding the wording on some older civil war markers in our area. Mr. Gruber told Chairperson Plaag that he would like his help with reviewing the Camp Mast marker to see if it could use some edits to the wording on it.

Mr. Gruber also asked Chairperson Plaag, if he knew of any other sites that should be commemorated in Watauga County. Chairperson Plaag told Mr. Gruber about the Union graves at the Boone Cemetery and the James Council house where the shooting started when Stoneman's Raid came into Boone. Chairperson Plaag noted that the James Council house used to sit where the Downtown Post Office is today.

Chairperson Plaag said that the Civil War Markers have to be placed on public property and the Downtown Post Office is owned by the Town of Boone. Mr. Gruber liked the location of a marker at the Downtown Post Office because it would be viewed a lot by the public.

Chairperson Plaag said Mr. Gruber was interested in the Union Graves at the Boone Cemetery, James Councill House and the Blalocks which are outside of Downtown Boone in Watauga County.

Chairperson Plaag said the Blalocks have a Civil War Marker assigned to them and it is being re-examined. He said that Mr. Gruber was intrigued with doing a Civil War Marker in Blowing Rock because this is the area that the Blalocks were from and where their more significant historical activity happened during the war. Chairperson Plaag said that he and the Watauga County Historical Society would be working with Mr. Gruber on the Blalock site.

Chairperson Plaag noted that he would be speaking again with Mr. Gruber after he speaks with the Watauga County Historical Society on some suggestions on where to put the Civil War Markers in Watauga County. Chairperson Plaag said that Mr. Gruber would send the suggestions to the TBA for their feedback.

Member Bond also suggested that recessed marble footstones be used in the cemetery and noted with the stones being recessed it would make the cemetery easier to maintain. Council Liaison Roseman agreed with Member Bond on the recessed marble footstones.

Discussion ensued on the funding for the markers. Member Bond noted that the Watauga County Historical Society could possibly help with funding for the said marker locations. Chairperson Plaag said that due to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 that the Civil War Trails marker group has funding that they did not use that might be available to help fund the installation of new markers in the new areas in 2021. Ms. Turner asked Mr. Mark Freed, Town of Boone Cultural Resources Director to explain to the HPC an email that Mr. Freed had sent her regarding funding. Mr. Freed explained that there is funding in the Cultural Resources Department budget that could be allocated to the Boone Cemetery to help purchase the recessed marble footstones. Mr. Freed noted that he would consult with Mr. John Ward, Boone Town Manager about said funds.

Member Bond offered to contact the Austin and Barnes Funeral Home in Downtown Boone to inquire about the cost and availability of the recessed marble footstones and report to the HPC at their next meeting. Mr. Freed said that he could ask the Public Works Department their thoughts on the footstones and get some samples for the HPC to look at them and then get a quote on them.

Chairperson Plaag said that potentially one of the educational panels could be paid for by the Civil War marker program. He explained that anything that is suggested by the HPC for Civil War marker has to be approved by the Tourism Development Authority because they are the Civil War Trails member for Watauga County. He explained that the cost of a marker is usually approximately \$2,500.00 and the member has to provide most of the cost of it, if not all of the cost.

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt joined the meeting at approximately 3:52 p.m.

Chairperson Plaag explained that because of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Civil Wars Trails program did not use most of their budget for its programming events. He said the Civil Wars Trails board has agreed to redirect some of their funding this year and subsidize new markers in new areas. He said this is an opportunity to get the Civil War Trails Markers paid for by working through the TDA and the Civil Wars Trails program.

Discussion ensued on the manufacturing of the markers. Member Watkins asked who does the manufacturing of the signs. Chairperson Plaag said that the Town might be able to ask if the font on the new markers mimic the font on other signage to prevent having clashing signage.

Chairperson Plaag suggested the possibility of Candlelight Tours in the said cemetery. He said the Candlelight Tours have been popular in other communities. Council Liaison Roseman agreed with the possibility of having Candlelight Tours in the cemetery. Chairperson Plaag noted that when the former Cultural Resources Director heard about this type of thing, there was a concern for the staffing of these type of events. Mr. Freed said he is not against the programming and he is happy to put budget dollars towards it. Mr. Freed noted that he is not familiar with the type of programming but the Cultural Resource Department could support some of the advertising or the promotion of it. Mr. Freed said that perhaps a theatre group could put together the programming of it. Council Liaison Roseman talked about the Candlelight Tours being a paid tour.

Council Liaison Roseman left the meeting at approximately 4:00 p.m.

Discussion ensued on the information for the markers to be located at the cemetery. The HPC agreed to have signage at the front gate of the cemetery that tells what it is and why it is sacred to the people of the Town of Boone and Watauga County. The HPC also agreed that the information should explain the history of the Councils and have a QR Barcode that includes a map of the cemetery and information on the Union Soldier graves and the division of the cemetery.

Chairperson Plaag offered to draft a statement regarding the HPC's recommendations for the educational panels. He said he would email the draft recommendations to Mr. Ward and the Boone Town Council for their review. Ms. Turner confirmed that the deadline to submit an action request for the April 2021 Council agenda is Friday, April 2, 2021.

Member Bond requested for the HPC to review the draft recommendations prior to them being sent to Council at their April 2021 Council meeting. Chairperson Plaag suggested that he could email the draft recommendations to the HPC for their review. He requested that all feedback should be emailed back to him only because of the meeting law requirements. Ms. Turner confirmed that a group email is not allowed under the meeting law requirements.

**Motion and Vote:**

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt made a motion, seconded by Member Bond for Chairperson Plaag to create a statement that contains the Historic Preservation Commission’s recommendations for the markers at the Boone Historic Cemetery Interpretative Educational Panels.

**Vote:**

Aye – All

Nay – None

**The motion passed.**

Chairperson Plaag polled the HPC members as follows:

Member Bond, Member Watkins, Vice-Chairperson Pollitt and Chairperson Plaag

**Town Streets**

Chairperson Plaag opened the floor for the HPC to discuss their research on the Town Streets. He noted that he made a placeholder on the sample version that he created for the Town website that he had worked on with the Planning Staff to add links for Town Streets and other information. He pointed out that the links can contain photos and other information on the streets along with the history of them.

Discussion ensued on the goal of the Town Street Project. Council Liaison Brantz asked Chairperson Plaag to explain in general the goal of researching the Town Streets. Chairperson Plaag said the goal is to have on the HPC website where the public can read about the history of the significant streets in the Town of Boone.

Member Bond voiced her frustration on not being able to find a lot of information on the Town Streets that she is researching which are River Street, Faculty Street and Howard Street. Member Watkins noted that it is a difficult time to try to do research with many public places being temporally closed because of the pandemic. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt noted that there are not a lot of maps to help with the research of the Town Streets. Chairperson Plaag talked about a county map. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt noted that she was familiar with the county map and it was not very helpful for this particular Town Street research. Chairperson Plaag said there is a map in the Jones House that he would like to scan for Digital Watauga; he said it is a very early street map of Boone that he thinks dates to the 1920’s.

Chairperson Plaag asked Ms. Turner about the possible digitizing of the some of the older town maps and posting them on the Digital Watauga website. Ms. Turner explained that the scanner that the Planning Staff is using needs replacement and the Planning Staff is waiting on the results of the budget hearings to see it can be replaced.

Chairperson Plaag noted that the HPC must use footnotes for the entries on their research to show where they found the information on the Town Streets.

Discussion ensued on other Town Streets. Chairperson Plaag said he needed volunteers to work on Depot Street and Queen Street. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt volunteered to work on Depot Street. Chairperson Plaag volunteered to work on Queen Street.

Chairperson Plaag noted that he would have the drafts prepared on the research he has completed on Water Street and King Street by the next HPC meeting. He said that the HPC could also review North Street at the next meeting.

### **Town Website**

Chairperson Plaag noted that the Planning Staff had asked that discussion on this agenda item be tabled to next HPC meeting in April of 2021. The HPC agreed to table this agenda item until their next meeting.

### **Digital Watauga Project Funding Renewal**

Ms. Turner explained that in the budget hearings that Ms. Shook had proposed that the annual funding renewal be a blanket approval. She said that Ms. Shook suggested that the HPC send a recommendation to Council for the suggested amount of \$5,000.00 for the year of 2021.

Chairperson Plaag asked Vice-Chairperson Pollitt to run the meeting while he recused himself from the HPC meeting for discussion on this topic, because he is directly involved with the Digital Watauga Project.

Chairperson Plaag explained the role that Digital Watauga plays in helping research and redevelopment of Downtown buildings with the Planning and Inspections Department as well as preserving the history of Watauga County. He further explained that the HPC relies on the services of Digital Watauga. He said that he anticipates that with the Town Streets project there will probably be a need for the services of Digital Watauga to process the Town Street photos. He said that Digital Watauga has allowed the use of its images for the Downtown Survey Report and District Designation Report that will be published. He said that Digital Watauga is continuing to take in new collections that show pieces of the architectural history.

Chairperson Plaag talked about the old Hunts Department store being located beside the Fire Department on King Street having the color blue on it along with structural glass that is under the brick veneer of the building. Ms. Turner told the HPC that she asked for a piece of the glass and it was given to her. Ms. Turner offered the piece of glass to Chairperson Plaag for the Digital Watauga Collection. Member Bond suggested that the piece of glass be given to the Watauga County Historical Society. She pointed out that the Sesquicentennial will rely heavily on what is in the collection.

On behalf of Digital Watauga Project, Chairperson Plaag requested that the Town of Boone continue to support the Digital Watauga Project with giving them the requested amount of \$5,000.00 for the year of 2021.

### **Motion and Vote:**

Member Watkins made a motion, seconded by Vice-Chairperson Pollitt for the Historic Preservation Commission to recommend to Council to continue to support Digital Watauga for the services that they provide to the Town of Boone and to the Historic Preservation Commission by honoring Digital Watauga with their requested funding renewal amount of \$5,000.00 for the year of 2021.

**Vote:**

Aye – (Bond, Pollitt Watkins)

Nay- None

Recused – (Plaag)

**The motion passed.**

Vice-Chairperson Pollitt polled the HPC members as follows:  
Member Bond, Member Watkins and Vice-Chairperson Pollitt

At the end of the discussion on this topic, Chairperson Plaag resumed his position as Chairperson of the HPC.

**Requests for Comments**

Ms. Turner explained that the Planning Staff had looked into Chairperson Plaag’s question from the last meeting regarding a blanket approval for anyone to speak for the HPC, when requested by the press or others.

Ms. Shook joined the meeting at approximately 4:48 p.m.

Ms. Shook responded and said that she had spoken with the Town Attorney on this topic. She said the Town Attorney recommended that the HPC not give a blanket approval to anyone to speak for the HPC, when requested by the media or others. She said the HPC members could speak as citizens on a topic the HPC might be considering.

**Informal Discussion or Other Matters**

Discussion ensued on a Superintendent of Public Welfare report from May of 1921. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt explained that she was a school nurse for 15 years and that she had found in some of her school paperwork the May 1921 Report from Mr. Ollie Coffey, who was the Superintendent of Public Welfare. She asked the HPC what she should do with the report. Chairperson Plaag suggested that Vice-Chairperson Pollitt adding the report to the Phoebe Pollitt Collection or adding it to an Anonymous Collection at Digital Watauga. Vice-Chairperson Pollitt supported the idea of the report being added to an Anonymous Collection.

Member Bond asked Chairperson Plaag how many items are online at Digital Watauga. Chairperson Plaag said that there are about 13,000 items online.

Chairperson Plaag suggested the following agenda items for the next HPC meeting: Town Website, Town Streets, COA Application, Junaluska Marker Dedication Road Closure, Cemetery Blocks and Downtown Projects Update.

**Adjournment**

Member Bond made a motion, seconded by Member Watkins to adjourn the meeting at 5:04 p.m.

**Vote:**

Aye – All

Nay – None

**The motion passed.**

Chairperson Plaag polled the HPC members by a show of hands by the following members: Member Bond, Vice-Chairperson Pollitt, Member Watkins and Chairperson Plaag.

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**Eric Plaag, Chairperson**

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**Marlene Crosby, Board Secretary**